

## Message Text

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51 43  
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SR-02 ORM-01 IO-10 AID-05

AGR-05 EB-07 /079 W  
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O 281210Z FEB 75  
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9558

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PFOR, EAID, CB  
SUBJECT: STARVATION IN CAMBODIA

REF: (A) STATE 040664  
(B) PHNOM PENH 12788  
(C) PHNOM PENH 3460  
(D) STATE 029904  
(E) STATE 043400

1. PROBLEMS ADDRESSED BY MEDIA AS REPORTED IN REF A, WHILE NEWS-  
WORTHY, ARE HARDLY NEW. MISSION IN REF B IN SEPTEMBER 1974  
ADDRESSED THE ISSUE OF MALNUTRITION AND UNDER-NUTRITION AS A  
MAJOR JUSTIFICATION FOR SHIFTING PART OF FY 1975 PL 480 TITLE I  
RICE PROGRAM TO TITLE II, PARTICULARLY DIRECTED AT THE REFUGEE  
POPULATION. MISSION AGAIN STRESSED THE PROBLEMS OF HAVES AND  
HAVE-NOTS IN REF C, WHICH PROVIDED ADDITIONAL DATA FOR USE BY  
STATE/AID IN PURSUING THE TITLE II PROGRAM FURTHER WITH ISC AS  
RESPONSE TO REF D. SUGGEST AID/W ADD THE SCHANBERG AND GREENWAY  
ARTICLES TO THE CUMULATIVE MATERIAL AVAILABLE FOR PERSUASION OF  
ISC THAT A COMPELLING BASIS DOES EXIST AND HAS EXISTED FOR A  
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TITLE II HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE RICE PROGRAM. A SHOWING OF THE  
CBS FILM FOR THE ISC MIGHT ALSO BE ARRANGED IN AN EFFORT TO HASTEN  
A FAVORABLE ISC DECISION IN ORDER THAT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE  
TITLE I STOCKS CAN BE SHIFTED TO THE TITLE II PROGRAM.

2. ALTHOUGH USAID HAS NO REPORT AS YET, AID/W MAY WISH TO CONTACT MESSRS FRED KEUHN AND JOHN FINE, IGA INSPECTORS WHO RECENTLY COMPLETED A REVIEW OF NUTRITION SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, PARTICULARLY PHNOM PENH.

3. ON FEBRUARY 18, 1975, UNICEF CONVENED A MEETING OF ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM OF MALNUTRITION IN GENERAL AND IN PARTICULAR THE INCREASE IN SEVERE CHILD MALNUTRITION REPORTED BY VOLAGS' MEDICAL TEAMS WORKING MAINLY BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY WITH REFUGEES. IN ATTENDANCE WERE MINISTRIES OF HEALTH AND REFUGEES, UNDP, WHO, ICRC, CARE, CRS, SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND, WVRO, VIAAR, UNICEF AND USAID. THE CONFEREES AGREED THAT THE PREVAILING SITUATION RESULTS FROM A COMBINATION OF INCREASED COST OF LIVING, RECENT INFLUX OF REFUGEES WITH LOW NUTRITIONAL LEVEL AND CHRONIC MALNUTRITION AMONG THE POOR AND DISADVANTAGED. THE CONDITION OF CHILDREN AND OTHERS BEING TREATED AT VARIOUS CLINICS IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO LONG-TERM CHRONIC UNDER-NUTRITION AND NOT TO ANY CURRENT SUPPLY PROBLEM, E.G., STOPPAGE OF MEKONG CONVOYS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, EXTENDED CLOSURE OF THE MEKONG WITHOUT ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF FOOD SUPPLY, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF HIGH PROTEIN FOOD SUPPLEMENTS ALONG WITH RICE, COULD SEE THE SITUATION DETERIORATE TO THE POINT OF GENERAL ACUTE MALNUTRITION.

4. THE RESULTS OF SEVERAL SURVEYS AND STUDIES WERE DISCUSSED BY THE CONFEREES. A JUNE 1974 STUDY BY A WHO NUTRITIONIST SHOWED THAT ABOUT 54 PERCENT OF THE CHILDREN SURVEYED WERE BELOW THE 80 PERCENT STANDARD WEIGHT OR QUOTE AT RISK UNQUOTE BY WHO STANDARDS. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM A CURRENT CARE NUTRITION SURVEY INDICATED THAT THE STANDARD WEIGHT OF CHILDREN IS CURRENTLY 24 PERCENT LOWER THAN IN 1973. WVRO'S COMPARISON OF THE AVERAGE WEIGHT OF CHILDREN ATTENDING THE CAMBODIANA CLINIC IN SEPTEMBER 1974 AND JANUARY 1975 SHOWS THAT SICK CHILDREN HAVE SUFFERED WEIGHT LOSS IN THIS SHORT PERIOD. MOH AND MINREF OBSERVATIONS BEAR OUT THE FINDINGS IN THIS REPORT.

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5. PRESENT ACTIVITIES DIVIDED BETWEEN CURATIVE AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

A. ON THE CURATIVE SIDE, ICRC, CRS, SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND, AND WVRO ARE OPERATING MEDICAL TEAMS AND CLINICS, MAINLY IN REFUGEE CAMPS AND POORER AREAS OF PHNOM PENH. ICRC ALSO OFFERS IN-PATIENT CARE OF PKM HOSPITAL PEDIATRICS SERVICES, WHERE 60 PERCENT OF BEDS OCCUPIED BY MALNOURISHED CHILDREN RECEIVING INTENSIVE CARE. WVRO IS OPERATING 90-BED INTENSIVE TREATMENT CLINIC AT TUOL KAUK DISPENSARY; HOWEVER, LIMITED FACILITIES

RESULT IN 85 PERCENT OF REFERRALS BEING TURNED AWAY. THE UNICEF-WHO-CARE DISPENSARY PROGRAM, INCLUDING FOUR NUTRITION CENTERS,

WILL BE OPERATING AT MAXIMUM CAPACITY IN ONE MONTH. THE GKR PROVIDES CURATIVE SERVICES THROUGH ITS OVERBURDENED MCH SERVICES AND PEDIATRIC WARDS.

B. PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS, OPERATED BY ICRC, CARE, CRS, SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND, AND WVRO, ARE BASICALLY FEEDING PROGRAMS SUPPLEMENTING RICE DISTRIBUTION AND ARE CONCENTRATED IN REFUGEE CAMPS AND POOR SECTIONS OF PHNOM PENH. MANY OF THE AGENCIES ALSO CONDUCT THE BASIC RICE DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS FOR REFUGEES.

6. REF A MENTIONS THAT PROBLEM IS QUOTE ONE LESS OF SUPPLIES THAN ONE OF INABILITY OF THE POOR TO BUY FOOD AND POOR DISTRIBUTION UNQUOTE. WE WOULD MINIMIZE THE DISTRIBUTION ASPECTS AND UNDERScore THE INABILITY OF THE POOR TO PAY. FOR EXAMPLE, AT THE TIME WE SUBMITTED REF B IN LATE SEPTEMBER 1974, LOCAL RICE SOLD AT THE CONTROLLED PRICE OF 140 RIELS/KILO AND 390 RIELS/KIL ON THE BLACK MARKET; ON FEBRUARY 22, THE COMPARABLE PRICES WERE 280 RIELS/KILO AND 460 RIELS/KILO. U.S. RICE SOLD IN SEPTEMBER AT THE CONTROLLED PRICE OF 155 RIELS/KILO AND 180 RIELS/KILO ON THE BLACK MARKET; THE CONTROLLED PRICE WAS THE SAME IN FEBRUARY; HOWEVER, THE BLACK MARKET PRICE HAD RISEN TO 390 RIELS/KILO. A CAN OF MILK ON OCTOBER 1 COST 520 RIELS AND ON FEBRUARY 22 THE SAME CAN SOLD FOR 650 RIELS. THE INEVITABLE EFFECT OF SUCH RISING PRICES IS REDUCED CONSUMPTION BY THOSE ALREADY UNDERNOURISHED AND FURTHER DEBILITATION OF THEIR HEALTH.

7. AS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE CONFERENCE DESCRIBED ABOVE, SEVERAL EXISTING PROGRAMS MAY BE EXPANDED AND SOME NEW INITIATIVES LAUNCHED. USAID NOW WORKING WITH MINISTRY OF HEALTH, UNICEF  
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AND VARIOUS VOLAGS TO ASSESS PRIORITIES AMONG VARIOUS PROPOSALS AND ESTABLISH COST FIGURES. AMONG THE POSSIBILITIES ARE PILOT SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING PROGRAMS USING MAINLY LOCAL FOOD, INCREASED UTILIZATION OF EXISTING DISPENSARIES TO PROVIDE MEDICAL AND NUTRITIONAL CARE, AND A 500-BED NUTRITIONAL REHYDRATION CENTER. INVOLVED VOLAGS ARE ALSO CALCULATING MAGNITUDES OF MONTHLY HIGH NUTRITION SUPPLEMENTS, E.G., MILK, WSB, ETC., WHICH WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS DIRECTED AT AIDING GKR IN ATTACKING THE NUTRITION PROBLEM. THESE REQUIREMENTS WILL BE PASSED ON TO AID AND HOPEFULLY APPROVALS CAN BE OBTAINED. NFDN IS HIGH ON LIST FOR MEDICAL THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT OF SEVERELY MALNOURISHED CHILDREN. ROUGH MONTHLY ESTIMATED OF USAGE BY VOLAGS IS 100 MT. PRESENTLY OBTAINING SUPPLIES IN REGION. WHAT ARE POSSIBILITIES OF U.S. SOURCE? ALSO REQUIREMENT FOR WAFERS FOLLOWS SEPTEL.

8. WE ARE FORWARDING UNDER SEPARATE COVER, THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 18, 1975 CONFERENCE, WHICH CONTAIN AS AN ATTACHMENT CERTAIN DATA ON ARM CIRCUMFERENCE MEASUREMENTS AND WEIGHT COMPARISONS COLLECTED BY THE IGA INSPECTORS.

9. AS STRESSED IN REF C, MISSION CONTINUES TO PRESS FOR RAPID ACTION TO APPROVE A TITLE II RICE PROGRAM THAT WILL ENABLE US TO PROVIDE RICE ALLOWANCES TO REFUGEES WITHOUT COST TO THE GKR, REACH A WIDER SEGMENT OF THE REFUGEE POPULACE, AND SUPPLEMENT INCOMES THROUGH PAYMENT UNDER FOOD FOR WOR. WE AGAIN REITERATE THAT STATE/AID SHOULD MAKE STRONG REPRESENTATIONS TO ISC FOR A RAPID APPROVAL OF OUR LONGSTANDING PROPOSAL.

10. REF E JUST RECEIVED AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS NOT FULLY ANSWERED IN THIS MESSAGE WILL ADDRESSED IN SEPTEL MENTIONED  
PARA 7. DECONTROL 2/27/76.  
DEAN

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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